Formation of a New Department of Earth Sciences

3146. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of OCEAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to form a new Department of Earth Sciences by merging Indian Meteorological Department and Department of Oceanography;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether this will be an improvement over the existing system of different departments?

THE MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, Government (Cabinet) has approved the reorganization of the Ministry of Ocean Development as Ministry of Earth Sciences. The Earth System Organization (ESO) as an executive mechanism under the Ministry of Earth Sciences would have two major entities, namely (i) Ocean Science and Technology Department and (ii) India Meteorological Department. The Ocean Science and Technology Department would consist of the existing Centres and Attached Offices of the Ministry of Ocean Development. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) would consist of the existing IMD, a strengthened Seismological Institute and the corresponding components (like Earthquake Risk Evaluation Centre and programme personnel) from the Department of Science and Technology (DST). The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) would report to ESO.

(c) Yes Sir, formation of Ministry of Earth Sciences will enable a framework for understanding the complex interactions among the key elements of the earth system, namely the ocean, atmosphere and the solid earth, by encompassing the functioning of national programmes in meteorology, climate and environmental science and seismology.

Findings of Rice Genome Research

3147. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the findings of Rice Genome Research by Indian scientists have been applied in rice research for increasing rice yield;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of genome research underway in respect of other agricultural products?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL). (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The findings of Rice Genome Research by Indian scientists have been used to identify genes which may contribute to yield by its improvement or curtailing losses for the same. The Rice Genome has been shown to have total of 37,544 genes, of which 1443 genes have been identified by Indian scientists in the region sequenced by them. Subsequently, multi-institutional functional genomics projects on rice have been launched by the Government to characterize and validate the genes controlling the yield, grain quality, salinity and insect and disease resistance. Some genetic markers have also been identified for high grain number in the panicle of rice and this is being used in the marker assisted breeding of rice varieties.

(c) Multi-institutional network mode research projects on structural and functional genomics have been supported in other crops. Recently, India became partner to the International Solanaceous Genome Initiative involving ten countries. A similar initiative has been taken on sugarcane genomics with the aim of developing Expressed Sequence Tags (EST) markers for biotic and abiotic stresses. In addition, we are also working on coffee genome project under which more than 150 molecular markers have been developed for germplasm characterization.

Setting up of a Rural Technology Centre in Jhalawar District of Rajasthan

3148. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Government of Rajasthan has sent any proposal on the 24th March, 2004 to Department of Bio-Technology for setting up a Rural Technology Centre in Jhalawar District in Rajasthan;

(b) if so, whether Government have, till date, sanctioned any amount for the proposed project to enable the implementing agency to initiate the necessary action in this regard;

(c) whether any detailed feasibility report of the project has been received/ submitted to Government by the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee; and

(d) if so, when?